CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 2 March 1989, at 3.30 p.m.

President: Mr. Chusei Yamada (Japan)

The PRESIDENT: The 491st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is now called to order.

As Japan assumes the presidency for the month of March, my Prime Minister has asked me to convey a message to the Conference which I would like to read. I quote:

"Japan has the honour to assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during this month, nearly seven years after it last held the post of the then Committee on Disarmament in April 1982.

"Recent years have witnessed marked improvements in the international climate surrounding bilateral relations as well as regional and multilateral issues. These trends give us a sustained hope that the priority objectives of the Conference on Disarmament, to which the Government and people of Japan continue to attach high importance, will become a reality.

"Such attainment requires, no doubt, patient and continuing efforts on the part of all member States to bridge the differences and to widen the areas of convergence. The very success of the recent Paris Conference on the prohibition of chemical weapons has demonstrated that it is indeed possible to obtain concrete results, when such efforts are made. Our mission is to make steady progress, building upon those successes as in chemical weapons and other important areas of disarmament.

"Japan is firmly committed to this worthy endeavour, and pledges to fulfil in all sincerity its heavy responsibility of the stewardship of the Conference at this important juncture.

"I extend my very best wishes to all delegates and earnestly hope for success in your undertakings."

This concludes the message.

I wish to pay a tribute of praise to my predecessor, Ambassador Puqliese of Italy. The month of February is an important month to set the course for our work during the whole year. Ambassador Pugliese, who presided during this crucial period, performed a marvellous task. Under his able leadership we can embark in our assignments with new determination. I would like to thank him also for the kind words and good wishes he addressed to me at the last plenary session. My task is to follow in his footsteps. May I ask for your kind co-operation so that I can fulfil my duty during the month of March.

This afternoon the Conference is honoured with the presence of two dignitaries. They are His Excellency Mr. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, and His Excellency Mr. Giulio Andreotti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy. The Vice-Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Foreign Minister of Italy have been playing key roles in multilateral disarmament. We had the privilege of listening to their

(The President)

addresses in our session last year as well as at the special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the forty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly, and, as recently as in January, the Paris Conference on the prohibition of chemical weapons. The importance of their visit is enhanced in particular because it takes place at a time when the conference is engaged in an intensive negotiating effort to achieve a comprehensive chemical weapons ban. The two statesmen represent countries which have always played a significant role in the Conference through the well-known contributions of their delegations to our daily work. We are indeed grateful to them for their personal interest in the work of the Conference, and I wish to extend a most cordial welcome.

I now call upon his Excellency Mr. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, to address the Conference.

Mr. GENSCHER (Federal Republic of Germany) (translated from German): At this time of dynamic developments in the field of disarmament and arms control, the Geneva Conference on Disarmament has also acquired increased tasks and responsibility for ensuring the maintenance and safeguarding of peace world-wide. My friend Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti of Italy and I have decided to appear here jointly again in order to underscore the great importance attaching to this Conference as the global negotiating forum for arms control and disarmament. Above all, this Conference has the task of freeing mankind as quickly as possible from the threat of chemical weapons by concluding a convention that completely bans chemical weapons world-wide.

You, Mr. President, are known as an experienced and circumspect diplomat versed in multilateral disarmament negotiations. I wish you every success in your responsible post, and assure you of my delegation's support. May your presidency bring about a successful and decisive session.

The conditions for this are good. In many parts of the world, conflicts are now being defused, tensions eliminated, and confrontation replaced by agreed settlements. This dynamic peace process is made possible by no longer thinking in terms of confrontation and rivalry. Instead new thinking predicated on responsibility and co-operation is gaining the upper hand. This gives cause for optimism and confidence. But it should not prompt us to be complacent. We are all faced with global challenges. The effects of the North-South conflict and the consequences of the debt burden are problems confronting the whole of mankind. The destruction of the environment, of rain forests and of the ozone layer poses a threat to us all. Only jointly can we safeguard our future; everyone must participate in this undertaking. We are united in the quest for survival. Mankind has come to realize this.

These new recognitions also extend to the sphere of disarmament and arms control. New, co-operative thinking in West and East is beginning to prevail in this field, too. The reduction of military arsenals has at last become a real possibility. In the case of American and Soviet land-based intermediate-range systems people throughout the world are witnessing the elimination of an entire class of weapons. This is accompanied by unprecedented and exemplary rules of verification.

(Mr. Genscher, Federal Republic of Germany)

The Stockholm Document and the INF Treaty mark a historic turning point. The breakthrough in the INF sector must now be followed by progress in the other areas of disarmament and arms control. Never before have the conditions been as favourable for disarmament and arms control. The completion of the Vienna CSCE Follow-up Meeting opens up new avenues to a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe. Europe has the chance to create an exemplary order marked by a new political quality, collaboration and co-operative security. We must set standards of coexistence that have effects reaching beyond our continent.

In Vienna, the way has now been paved for two new sets of arms control negotiations. The aim of the negotiations on conventional forces is to achieve stability at a significantly lower level of armaments. It must be ensured that neither side is able to launch surprise attacks or large-scale offensives, which we for our part are already unable to do. In view of the existing disparities, equilibrium at a significantly lower level can only be achieved through asymmetrical disarmament. This means that the Eastern side must make larger disarmament steps than us. The unilateral reductions announced by the Soviet Union and subsequently by other members of the Warsaw Pact are important steps in the right direction, which we welcome. They do not eliminate the existing imbalances, but they show that the East is seriously seeking to move in the direction of Western ideas on conventional disarmament.

Confidence is a precondition of disarmament. Confidence is the product of openness and predictability. For this reason, the other forum established in Vienna for negotiations on new confidence-building measures in Europe is important. Neither weapons nor weapons reductions can on their own guarantee peace and stability. Lasting security presupposes that the two sides agree on the philosophies underlying their defence. In the forthcoming negotiations we therefore intend to achieve a common understanding to the effect that military forces should only exist to prevent war and ensure self-defence, not for the purpose of military aggression and not for the purposes of political or military intimidation.

In this nuclear age, a responsible security policy must be guided by the recognition that mankind can survive only through joint efforts. As realists, we are aware that today's security must not be based on visions and expectations for tomorrow. But as men of action as policy makers living up to their responsibility for the future, we must today develop perspectives for future security and lay foundations that are broader, firmer and stronger than those on which peace has rested until now. Over the net of deterrence by nuclear and conventional means as the final resort, we must spread an additional net which reduces the risks resulting from exclusive reliance on military deterrence. This requires the creation of reliable and co-operative security structures not only in Europe, but world-wide. Wherever disarmament and arms control are at issue in the world, it must be borne in mind that confidence-building paves the way to more disarmament. And disarmament in turn generates confidence. Let us set in motion this spiral of reason world-wide.

(Mr. Genscher, Federal Republic of Germany)

The INF Treaty has initiated a process which must become irreversible. Other steps must soon follow. The countries not possessing nuclear weapons will not allow the nuclear-weapon States to evade their commitment to nuclear disarmament, which they assumed before the rest of the world in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The constructive continuation and early successful completion of the United States-Soviet START negotiations are urgently needed for ensuring strategic stability at a lower level. The remaining gaps in the field of nuclear arms control must be closed. For this reason, we consider negotiations on short-range nuclear systems, as decided in the Western Alliance at Reykjavik in 1987, to be a top priority. We call for negotiations on these systems to be started without delay in accordance with the Reykjavik decisions; there are no reasonable grounds for not initiating such negotiations. We welcome the Soviet Union's readiness for negotiations of this kind. What we need are not firebreaks against new disarmament negotiations, but firebreaks to prevent an unbridled arms race. The Soviet Union, which has a great superiority in the field of short-range nuclear systems, could facilitate promising disarmament negotiations by offers of unilateral disarmament.

A Convention wholly banning biological weapons has existed since 1972. A shortcoming of his Convention is the lack of verification rules. I would therefore like to announce at this stage that at the third review conference in 1991 my Government will advocate adequate verification measures to supplement the Convention. I call upon all countries that have not yet done so to sign the Convention prohibiting biological weapons.

Mr. President, the most urgent contribution to disarmament expected of this Conference by the world is the elimination of a particularly cruel and insidious category of weapons of mass destruction: chemical weapons. In this respect, the multilateral disarmament process on a global scale is facing a crucial test. A year ago, I emphasized here, together with my colleague Mr. Andreotti from Italy, that the global, comprehensive and verifiable prohibition of chemical weapons is a matter of the greatest urgency. Above all, we warned of the risk of proliferation of chemical weapons. Meanwhile it has become painfully clear how right that assessment was. The shock caused by the use of chemical weapons in the Gulf war led to the international community, on the suggestion of the American President and at the invitation of President Mitterrand, holding a conference in Paris on the prohibition of chemical weapons. At the Paris Conference high-level representatives from 149 countries jointly sought ways and means of putting an end to the use and spread of chemical weapons. The international community was at one in condemning chemical weapons. This permitted consensus on the Final Declaration of Paris, which demanded the early conclusion of a convention banning chemical weapons. We must now do justice to that call here in Geneva. Everyone's words must be followed by deeds.

In Paris, the recognition that only a comprehensive and global ban can solve the problem of chemical weapons gained considerable ground. As long as there are no peremptory rules of international law prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and transfer of chemical weapons, the risk of their unlawful use will persist. As long as national export controls

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remain the only legal instrument for preventing the proliferation of chemical weapons, it will not be possible to rule out reliably any misuse of chemical substances and equipment allegedly supplied for peaceful purposes. As long as there is no international monitoring system that permits systematic on-site inspections at short notice, it will be hard to dispel any suspicion of the clandestine development and production of chemical weapons. And as long as the arsenals of chemical weapons are not eliminated world-wide, it will be almost impossible to obtain a voluntary renunciation of the capacity for chemical warfare, especially in areas of crisis.

More and more countries are trying to acquire with foreign assistance the capability for producing chemical weapons. Foreign companies, and unfortunately German ones as well, supply components and chemical precursors or provide the requisite know-how. The alarming proliferation of chemical weapons confronts all countries with a grave responsibility that no government can shirk. Particularly for our country this is a deeply moral matter, which directly affects the identity and credibility of our State.

The Federal Republic of Germany has renounced the production and use of chemical weapons through an internationally binding pledge. It is the only country thus far to subject its chemical industry to regular on-site inspections by an international agency. We consider it our duty to do everything humanly possible to prevent the participation of German companies and individuals in the production of these terrible weapons in other countries. Such participation is a crime and must be treated and punished as such. The laws and controls will be tightened. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has therefore responded to the recent occurrences with a series of measures, of which I would like to mention the main ones:

Firstly, we shall extend the authorization requirements for the export of technical documents and know-how. In future, the export of production and other technological documents, as well as the transfer of not generally accessible technical know-how to other countries in the world, will require authorization in all instances. Secondly, the authorization requirements for the export of precursors of chemical weapons will be extended from 8 to 17 substances. This will apply to exports to all countries without exception. Thirdly, it will be made obligatory, even before any export, to notify the production of equipment capable of being used for the purposes of chemical weapons. Fourthly, the criminal provisions governing violations of foreign trade and payments legislation are being tightened. Penalties of up to five years' imprisonment may be imposed. Fifthly, new provisions are being introduced which make it punishable for Germans to assist - in whatever manner, be it at home or abroad - in the production of chemical weapons facilities or the development and manufacture of chemical or biological weapons. This offence will be subject to not less than 2 and up to 15 years' imprisonment.

On 20 February of this year, the Council of Ministers of the European Community adopted on my initiative a regulation under article 113 of the EC Treaty which subjects to authorization the export of eight chemical substances suitable as precursors of chemical weapons. Our aim is to achieve

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consensus within the European Community on considerably expanding this list so as to achieve the most comprehensive instrument possible for preventing the spread of precursors of chemical weapons. We are also striving together with our partners in European political co-operation to introduce mandatory authorization with regard to the export of facilities and equipment suited to the production of chemical weapons. It is our aim that such an agreement should as soon as possible be made binding on all 19 countries united in the "Australia Group". I appeal to the bodies that I have just mentioned to accord the highest priority to these measures. Every effort must be made to ensure that the chemical weapons production facilities now under construction are not completed.

However, on no account must we succumb to the illusion that national and international measures can effectively prevent the proliferation of chemical weapons, though such measures are at present greatly needed because this Conference has not yet concluded a convention fully banning chemical weapons world-wide. There is no alternative to a comprehensive, global and effectively verifiable convention which prohibits without restriction the development, production, possession, acquisition, transfer and use of chemical weapons and brings about the complete destruction of existing chemical weapons stocks under international supervision. The risk of proliferation will grow as long as this legal vacuum persists. It arouses the desire of those who do not possess chemical weapons. I strongly warn against confining the fight against chemical weapons to measures designed to prevent their spread. Such an approach would undermine the determination of the international community to effectively ban chemical weapons through a global, comprehensive convention.

On 18 April 1984 President Bush, then still Vice-President of the United States, rightly stated at this very Conference: "The essence of verification is deterrence of violations through the risk of detection." A global ban will only be effective if it is verifiable. In the matter of verifiability, especially in challenge inspections, the security interests of mankind must take precedence over the economic interests of companies that are worried about their business secrets. This must not be the hour of the pusillanimous who encumber the substance of the negotiations with more and more technical and legal problems and describe the verification issues as unsolvable. Time is pressing! The negotiations of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament on a convention that prohibits chemical weapons world-wide must therefore be brought to a successful conclusion at last.

In the Final Declaration of the Paris Conference, the countries participating in this Conference here were called on "to redouble their efforts, as a matter of urgency, to resolve expeditiously the remaining issues and to conclude the convention at the earliest date". This signal from Paris must be translated into practice here in Geneva. This imposes a duty on all negotiating delegations in this forum and on the Governments they represent. I wish Ambassador Morel as the new Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons every success in his new responsible post. I would also like to thank his predecessor, Ambassador Sujka, for his dedicated and purposeful conduct of the negotiations in 1988.

(Mr. Genscher, Federal Republic of Germany)

I share the expectation of the United Nations Secretary-General that the commitment expressed at such a high level in Paris will expedite the negotiations here. It is possible to solve the problems still obstructing the conclusion of a convention by the end of this year. This also applies to the subject of verification. The Final Document of the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, as well as the United States-Soviet INF Treaty, opened the door to a world in which systematic checks and mandatory challenge inspections play a natural confidence-building function. In the efforts towards chemical disarmament, too, the technical complexities of the verification issue must not become a pretext for deferring the solution of what is essentially a political problem.

As the outcome of many years of work by this Conference, an advanced draft convention is available, which also contains the fundamentals of a comprehensive verification régime. However, over the years this text has become more and more complicated. Some points are unclear or ambiguous, as inevitably results from different views at a particular time. It is now essential to consolidate the draft where consensus has already been achieved on substantive issues and, at the same time, to find suitable solutions to those questions still in abeyance.

During this year's round of negotiations, we must succeed in solving the main problems involved in the envisaged verification régime. While chairing the new Working Group on verification, my delegation will make special efforts to bring about consensual solutions to the outstanding verification issues. Above all, two important questions concerning the verification of a chemical weapons convention, namely the monitoring of non-production of chemical weapons and challenge inspections, have yet to be resolved. One of the most difficult tasks is that of reliably monitoring the chemical industry. It must be ensured that the permitted production of substances which are also suitable as precursors of chemical weapons exclusively serves peaceful purposes. This Conference has developed a graduated monitoring system to that end.

To supplement the measures already discussed for monitoring non-production, my delegation introduced during the last round of negotiations a concept for additional inspections at short notice in the form of ad hoc checks applicable to the entire chemical industry. With the aid of a simple analytical procedure, it is to be established whether any prohibited or undeclared substances are being manufactured at the time of the inspection. Such ad hoc checks are intended to supplement routine inspections and can be carried out without time-consuming, excessive interference with production processes. This new flexible instrument offers clear-cut advantages for the verification of a chemical weapons convention: even if there is no suspicion, the entire chemical industry is accessible to the inspectorate. With the aid of simple, scarcely intrusive checks, a high degree of transparency is achieved in what is at present a grey area. Therefore, these ad hoc checks ought to be acceptable to everyone.

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However, mandatory challenge inspections remain indispensable as the main means of obtaining certainty in a specific case as to whether the convention is being complied with. They permit swift clarification in any case involving serious concern about security. This problem should be tackled as a matter of priority. The associated political and technical difficulties are well known but confidence-building, protection against violations of the convention and the protection of human life and dignity must take precedence. Absolutely nothing can justify the rejection of mandatory challenge inspections, and certainly not the business interests of individual companies.

Even before the convention is concluded, practical experience should be gathered so that its verification provisions can be made as realistic and effective as possible. We have therefore unreservedly welcomed the suggestion of trial inspections and have, like various other countries, declared our readiness to undergo such inspections. A few weeks ago, the Federal Republic of Germany carried out its first trial inspection in the form of a routine inspection at a facility of the civilian chemical industry. The results were encouraging. Our experience has convinced us that it is possible with the aid of routine inspections to ensure adequate monitoring of the non-production of prohibited substances.

As with routine inspections, we expect practical trials of ad hoc checks to yield important information. We are, therefore, at present preparing a trial inspection in the form of an ad hoc check at a major chemical plant. The chemical industry is receptive to this new verification instrument and its testing. We shall report in detail on the experience we gain. The exchange of experience here in Geneva on all national trial inspections will provide important information on how to improve the verification rules. It will also lay the basis for international trial inspections, which we shall gladly participate in. The German chemical industry will also make a plant available for that purpose.

The national or international trial inspections carried out or envisaged in many countries also reflect the growing openness and co-operation of countries in the field of chemical disarmament. This creates a new dimension of confidence, which is beneficial for the negotiations on a verifiable chemical weapons convention. The aim must be to achieve such a degree of monitoring that it is not possible for anyone to manufacture and stockpile militarily significant quantities of chemical weapons without being discovered.

We must reach agreement soon if we are to live up to our common responsibility for putting an end once and for all to the atrocities of chemical warfare. Given good will on the part of everyone concerned, this ought to be possible by the end of this year. I appeal to the world's scientists to refuse to participate in the development and production of these terrible weapons of mass destruction. I therefore address this urgent appeal to the Governments of the countries represented here: for the purpose of definitively eliminating these weapons, let us demonstrate maximum commitment, creativity and readiness for compromise. Let us make every effort to arrive as soon as possible at a convention that is ready for signature. We must not shatter the hopes of our nations. We must not cause the process of

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disarmament, which is now under way on a broad basis, to founder on this decisive threshold. We all know that there are still difficult problems to be solved. But at this advanced stage, invoking those problems can no longer serve as a pretext for relaxing our efforts.

We must do everything possible to ensure at an early stage that countries which are not members of this Conference are suitably informed and become involved where appropriate. We must avoid a situation where, after this Conference has completed its work, individual countries refuse to accede to the convention on the grounds that they had insufficient opportunities to participate in drafting it. The requisite globality of the convention presupposes that the opportunities for participation open to all countries are actually used. We should therefore encourage all interested countries to take part as observers in the meetings of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. I expressly welcome the representatives of those countries who already perform this important task, and especially this session's newcomers.

Mr. President, we are in a position where we can make the vision of a world without chemical weapons become reality. You may rest assured that my delegation will continue to contribute actively to this endeavour. The obstacles on the path to a convention banning chemical weapons can now be surmounted. This lofty goal merits our full commitment. It is my most fervent wish that this Conference will prove an unqualified success.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany for his important contribution to the work of the Conference. In my capacity as the representative of Japan I would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Excellency for personally participating in representing your Government at the funeral of His late Majesty last week. I would also like to thank His Excellency for the very kind words you addressed to me.

I now call upon His Excellency Mr. Giulio Andreotti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, to address the Conference.

Mr. ANDREOTTI (Italy) (translated from Italian): I am particularly pleased to address this gathering again, one year on, together with my friend, Mr. Genscher. The year has not passed in vain: in fact, the prospects for hope and peace have been reinforced.

Some of the most serious crises bequeathed to us by the previous decade seem to be gradually coming to an end, or at least their gravity seems to be decreasing. In the most bloody conflict of all, in the Gulf, a truce, although precarious, has been agreed upon. It is up to the two parties to bridge the gap still separating them from a veritable and durable peace. In Afghanistan the withdrawal of Soviet troops has removed one of the main obstacles to the solution of the crisis, but has also opened a phase of extreme uncertainty. Our commitment, the commitment of the European Community countries, is that of following the events carefully and providing our own political and material support for a peaceful transition.

(Mr. Andreotti, Italy)

Dialogue is continuing between the United States and the Soviet Union, substantially uninterrupted by the change of Administration in Washington. Following the entry into force of their agreement of 8 December 1987, we witnessed the elimination of a first contingent of highly sophisticated instruments of death, and this underlines even more clearly the innovative, I would even say revolutionary, nature of the agreement.

The CSCE Conference in Vienna has set new, historic and demanding goals in terms of security, human rights and freedom of expression and communication. In a very few days, negotiations will begin on conventional armed forces in Europe and confidence-building measures, which will be extremely important for the prospects of enhanced stability at decreasing levels of forces and for a gradual restructuring of all military deployments in accordance with defensive criteria.

Finally, the results of the Paris Conference of 7-11 January have vindicated the initiative taken by Mr. Genscher and myself in February 1988, when we pressed for a general commitment to intensified negotiations on a total ban on this kind of weapon. In Paris, we realized that the concerns we had expressed on that occasion were broadly shared by the international community. From that Conference, which was attended by practically every country in the world, there emerged a generalized rejection of chemical weapons and a firm commitment on the part of everyone to give a further boost to negotiations on a convention which would not only ban their use, but at last prohibit their development, production, possession and very existence.

Let us seize on this favourable opportunity that the political situation is offering us, which we may never be offered again, to stave off for ever the scourge of war in its most devastating forms. The Paris Conference reaffirmed the role of the United Nations and gave it renewed vigour, strengthening its monitoring powers and its political and moral authority which no one will wish to evade. It is now necessary to set up the procedures that will allow the Secretary-General to promptly and effectively act in the face of future allegations on the use of chemical weapons. The outcome of the Paris Conference will be measured above all in terms of your work. Hence the additional responsibility of this institution, which has to pursue concrete objectives in relation to peace and stability by proceeding towards the elimination of a whole class of weapons, as has already been done in the case of intermediate-range missiles.

Over-estimation of the requirements of one's own security hinders disarmament, while an imperfect knowledge of the capabilities and intentions of the other side fuels suspicion and mistrust. This is the main reason why it is so difficult to solve intricate problems in an area where the risk of violating commitments is increased by the many connections that exist between civilian production and potential military uses. Italy is endeavouring to enhance the role of the international scientific community, precisely to help solve the problems relating to verification and transparency.

(Mr. Andreotti, Italy)

We are firmly persuaded that only a global solution can root out the growing risk of proliferation of weapons which are not only deadly, but also hideous, in a context of rigorous verifiability that will deter violations. Italy neither possesses nor intends to develop chemical weapons, and does not host them on her soil. Our commitment to the rapid establishment of conditions which will persuade all countries to resolutely and effectively reject them, in line with the conclusions of the Paris Conference, is therefore all the more credible.

One of the main objectives, in our opinion, is the rapid neutralization of all existing stockpiles and production facilities. Their destruction should begin as soon as the future convention comes into force, at a faster pace in the case of the largest arsenals. I also believe that the storage depots and production plants should be immediately made subject to rigorous international monitoring, pending their total elimination.

All of us have appreciated the willingness of the Soviet Union to unilaterally begin the destruction of its large quantities of chemical weapons; our only regret is that this decision had not been taken earlier - for example, before the United States resumed production of such weapons after an interval of 17 years. We view the Soviet initiative, which in due course will have to be channelled into the verification procedures provided under the future convention, as a step in the right direction, to which the other great Power will certainly not remain insensitive.

We have already supplied information on Italy's production of substances relevant to the convention, and we are ready to participate in a wider and even more detailed and exhaustive exchange of data. Until a total ban is imposed, we are also willing to adopt further measures to check the export of chemicals that could be used for military purposes, as well as appropriate sanctions. Italian legislation is in fact one of the strictest in this regard. The more advanced industrial countries are duty-bound to act rigorously and consistently and co-ordinate their actions. We have stressed this need in multilateral forums, such as the Western European Union and the European Community.

We have also promoted a trial inspection in some Italian chemical plants by an international group of scientists, whose findings have just been made available to this institution. For this reason too, it is satisfying to note that the experimental method was recommended at the end of the most recent session of the Conference on Disarmament.

The countries most concerned, which certainly include Italy, could also promote and co-ordinate scientific initiatives that will help to settle the still unresolved issues in the negotiation; gather and disseminate useful information for effective implementation of the ban; and co-ordinate possible initiatives taken by the industrial associations of different countries in this particular field in order to increase public awareness of the risks proliferation entails.

(Mr. Andreotti, Italy)

Supported by an increasingly attentive public opinion, negotiations have now reached the point of no return, and this is likely to be a decisive year in overcoming the greatest obstacles. Hence the need to deal resolutely and in an open spirit with those aspects of the convention that still require further political and juridical development. I am referring specifically to non-production, the institutional aspects, challenge inspections, and the destruction of chemical weapons and their production facilities. Through serious debate, we have to resolve our existing differences and make a quantum leap forward without ignoring legitimate national concerns. For years now, the working group system has worked to everyone's satisfaction, and I am convinced that it will continue to do so in the light of the constructive changes recently adopted. However, we must also think in terms of restructuring some negotiating methods, so that we can more rapidly bridge the distance that still separates us from our goal.

A year ago, when I addressed this gathering, I suggested that a select working group should be given the task of identifying proposals to intensify the work of the Ad hoc Committee. I believe that this proposal is still worthy of careful consideration, and I wish to advance it once again today. In this context, it is first of all our view that the long intervals in the negotiating activity of the Committee should be reduced, so as to give the negotiations the necessary lasting impulse and an increased incisiveness. I consider very appropriate the creation of an ad hoc working group - as we had advocated - responsible for all verification aspects. To my mind, it is evident that, however complex this essential problem might be, it has to be dealt with comprehensively, not leaving the various aspects of it to be handled by different groups with little functional linkage between them.

While chemical weapons represent a priority issue, we are aware that the remit of the Conference on Disarmament comprises numerous other issues. On the subject of nuclear weapons, we cannot but welcome the progress recently made in the dialogue between the two leading Powers. The INF agreement is only a first step, but it also marks a historic new departure, and its implications for future agreements are already before our eyes. In this context, and also taking into consideration the approaching fourth review conference of the non-proliferation Treaty, the Italian Government hopes that negotiations will resume as soon as possible and will proceed rapidly towards their conclusion, with a view to achieving drastic reductions in strategic arsenals, in a framework of enhanced general stability.

The negotiations on nuclear tests which the United States and Soviet Union began in November 1987 also seem to be taking advantage of the favourable moment in the relations between these two countries. A process has been set in motion whose final outcome, though still far in the future, should be the total cessation of all nuclear tests, as an element of effective disarmament. In Geneva, much could be done to this effect. We regret that it has once again proven impossible to reach agreement on the procedures to be followed in order to open a substantive debate. A preliminary discussion is indispensable, designed to ascertain which of the various existing proposals or future initiatives could be conducive to substantive negotiations. In our view, such a debate would permit all countries to clarify their positions and identify the points of agreement and disagreement on the role that the Conference on Disarmament can play.

(Mr. Andreotti, Italy)

One of the final issues on which we are focusing our attention is the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Space is destined for peaceful activities, and its use or exploration must be for the benefit of all countries, whatever their level of economic and scientific development. Primary responsibility for seeking effective and verifiable agreements undoubtedly lies with the two leading Powers. I believe that both of them, like all of us, are fully aware that unrestrained competition in this field would eventually prove to be a costly and unproductive enterprise. The bilateral negotiations being conducted in Geneva, although complex and sensitive, suggest that a constructive approach will be pursued. We would wish to encourage the United States of America and the Soviet Union to reach an agreement which will safeguard strategic stability and foster co-operation, in the context of rigorous respect for existing agreements.

The current debate on this subject at the Conference on Disarmament is still in a preliminary phase: recently, however, it has been possible to make a detailed examination of issues of quite considerable importance: for example, the applicable legal régimes, terminology, and identifying activities conducted in space. This gathering can play a role of prime importance with regard to this problem, while making due allowances for the fact that many and diverse political, strategic and technological requirements converge, sometimes contradictorily. However, it is a sector of activity of enormous relevance to the peaceful future of mankind, and will require increased commitment on the part of us all.

We may wonder whether that disturbing state of international relations, hovering between impossible peace and improbable war, which has dominated the post-war period, is now drawing to an end. Some of the constraints, including psychological ones, which have been weighing heavily on our destinies and creating a world in which vast political and economic resouces have been squandered by rivalry and mutual suspicion, are beginning to fade. The United Nations is the workshop where a new form of coexistence is being fashioned.

Andrei Sakharov, who was a guest in Italy a few weeks ago, had this to tell us:

> "Progress has provided surprising answers to social problems. But we must tread carefully, because the enormous growth in technology is creating new threats to mankind: ecological disaster and nuclear conflict. There can be no solution to these problems unless there is ever broader international agreement."

Your commitment is vital to removing some of the barriers that still separate us from this better world. I will therefore conclude by wishing you every success in your work during the year which has just begun, and which already holds out great expectations.

Before leaving this gathering I would like to express my most heartfelt congratulations to Ambassador Yamada, who has assumed the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the month of March, and wish him every success in the fulfilment of his task.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy for his important contribution to the work of the Conference. I would also like to thank Your Excellency for the very kind words you addressed to me.

I have no other speakers on my list for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

I will now proceed with our regular business. The secretariat has agreed today, at my request, to circulate an informal paper containing the timetable of meetings of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies for the week 6-10 March. As usual, the timetable is merely indicative and subject to change, if need be. If I see no objection, I shall take it that the Conference adopts the timetable.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: As I have no other business for today, I now intend to adjourn this plenary meeting, but before doing so I would like to thank all the delegations, and in particular Ambassador García Robles, Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee on the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament, and Mr. Gomaa, Chairman of Working Group 2 of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, for their co-operation in accommodating the change of plenary schedule to this afternoon.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Tuesday, 7 March, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.